2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

1796
●532

St George and partisans

[Frontispiece, facing p.iii]

4: Cassar P-4, 5 (no date) 1964 EZ6 Malta EZ6

532
782

PAUL CASSAR MEDICAL VOTIVE OFFERINGS IN THE MALTESE ISLANDS PLATE I

[172]

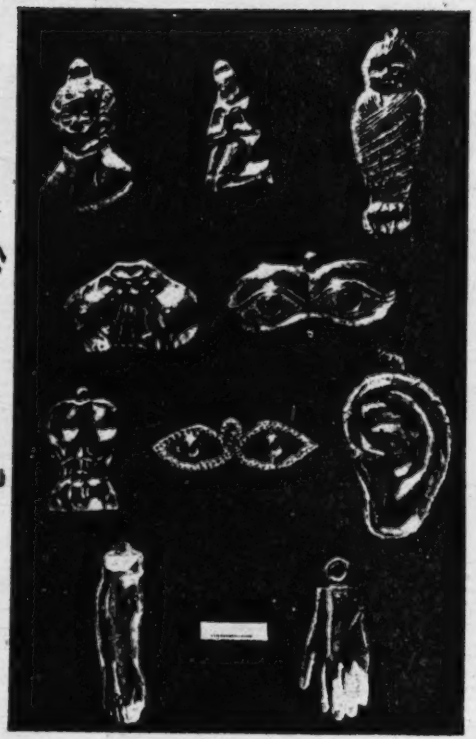


FIGURE 1

FIGURE 2

FIGURE 3

1/1 [Caption: [facing P. 24] appear on p. 29.- An.)

4: Cassar P-4, 5 (no date) 1964 EZ6 Malta EZ6

175 755 787 781 (iii) Giovanna Debrincat had been suffering from depression with religious scruples for eight months. Her symptoms became acute one day in February with extreme anxiety, agitation, and insomnia. This phase lasted for four consecutive days and nights in spite of the efforts of the doctor and a priest to reassure her and placate her. Finally her relatives annointed her with the sanctuary oil and appealed to the Blessed Virgin to cure her. The patient immediately became tranquil and had a peaceful sleep. When she woke up, all her symptoms had disappeared (*Id-devot ta Maria*, 1890).

● 532 172 782 [171] NEOLITHIC VOTIVE OFFERINGS

The custom of offering 'ex-votos' to the deity for favours received is not limited to the Maltese Islands and goes back to very remote times. The neolithic 'ex-votos' of Malta are made of clay and limestone, and measure from 1½ to 3½ inches in height. No less than fifteen of them, consisting of the following anatomical forms, have been found:

(i) Faces: 2.
(ii) Hand: 1.
(iii) Female torsos with large abdomen, pendulous breasts, and prominent genitalia: 4.
(iv) Kneeling female (?) torso with arms folded on breast: 2.
(v) Fragment of female statuette consisting of lower abdomen, both thighs, and right leg: 1.
(vi) Female body cut short in the neck and upper parts of the thighs; the left arm is bent on the nape of the neck and the right upper limb points to the genitalia which are very clearly shown. The abdomen and breasts are very full and a swelling fills the left groin while pieces of white shells are stuck in the armpits, groins, umbilicus, mons veneris, and other parts.
(vii) Female pelvis with upper parts of thighs and sexual triangle: 2.
(viii) Legs: 2 (Zammit & Singer 1924, p. 67).

17 782 [997] The Roman occupation of Malta (218 B.C.–A.D. 397) is represented by one solitary 'ex-voto' consisting of a clay model of the lateral view of a leg and foot. It was found quite recently with other Roman objects in the north-west part of the island (Plate 1, Fig. 2). The inhabitants of the Maltese Islands were converted to Christianity by St Paul in A.D. 60. No more 'ex-votos' can be traced for many hundreds of years until they reappear in the eighteenth century under the influence of the Catholic Church. The interruption in the time-sequence and the change of religious beliefs do not, however, prevent us from perceiving that they have a common purpose and that the 'ex-votos' of Stone Age and Roman times foreshadow the similar ones of later years. Indeed the same ideational process links the ancient ones with those of our own times.

782 532 755 Anatomical 'ex-votos' are still preserved in many of the Catholic churches of Malta and Gozo and in several wayside shrines in the countryside and in niches in the towns. They are either figures of the complete human body or of parts of it. The former consist of the front view of babies with the trunk and limbs swathed in bands like a mummy; and of side views of men and women in a kneeling posture with their hands joined in prayer over their breasts or else holding a symbolical heart. The men are turned towards the left and the women look towards the right. The models representing parts of the

532
782
789
[402]
[291]

FIGURE 1

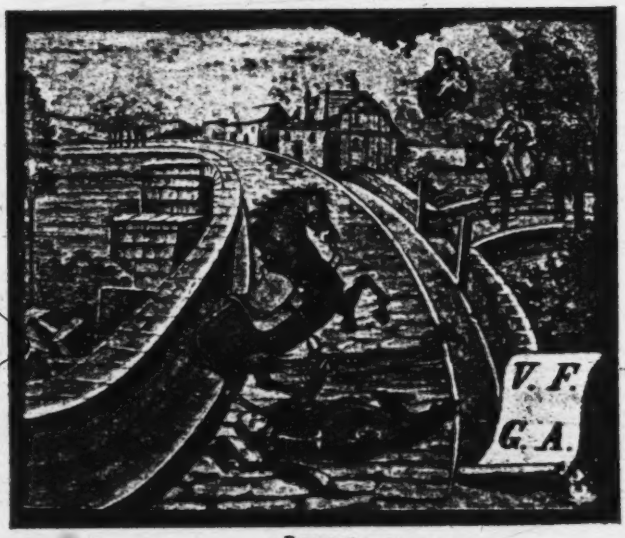


FIGURE 2

[facing P. 25]
1/A [captions appear on p. 29 - An.]

4: Cassar P-4, 5 (no date) 1964 EZ6 Malta EZ6

body include faces, eyes, ears, upper limbs, hands, trunks, female breasts, hearts, thighs, legs, and feet (Plate 1, Fig. 1). Although they show no deformities and no pathology they indicate the part affected by illness and healed by divine intercession. Thus 'legs were offered for paralysis, congenital anomalies and chronic ulcers in the lower limbs; 'arms' and 'hands' for fractures and threatened loss of fingers by injury or gangrene; 'ears' for deafness and otitis; and 'eyes' for a variety of ocular diseases. Sometimes, however, the association of illness and anatomical part is not so specific; thus 'trunks' were offered for such varied conditions as throat affections, hernias, and mental disorder; 'faces' for enlarged glands in the neck; and pairs of female 'breasts' for deficiency of milk in a lactating mother as well as disease of these organs.

They were made of wax or of raised work in gold and silver foil. Those met with at present are the silver ones, the others having disappeared from the churches though they were still being offered at the end of the last century if not later. There are records of wax effigies of arms, legs, eyes, and babies and also of gold ones having been deposited at that period at Ta Pinu Church at Gharb in Gozo. A pair of gold legs cost £17 (*Id-devot ta Maria* 1890; Kerr 1893). Wax figures also existed until some thirty years ago in the small church of Tal Mirakli at Lija (Tanti 1962). These objects were manufactured in Malta but some of them were imported from Sicily and North Africa. The gold and silver foil was hammered into the desired shape over dies of bronze by a silversmith (Plate 1, Fig. 3). They vary in size from 6 by 2½ inches to 1 by 3½ inches. Some of them bear hall-marks which help to date them and identify the source of manufacture. The earliest met so far by the writer is a stylized silver model (in the writer's collection) of a pair of female breasts impressed with the hall-marks of the Grand Master of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Em. de Rohan who ruled over the Maltese Islands from 1775 to 1797.

The deposition of anatomical 'ex-votos' in Maltese churches ceased in 1935. The ecclesiastical council held in that year in Malta under the presidency of Cardinal H. Lepicier disallowed the exhibition of 'votive offerings showing parts of the human body except those in the shape of a heart', (*Concilium*, 1935, p. 60), so that the present-day visitor will hardly see anything else except 'hearts' hanging by the statues of the saints to whom they were offered by grateful devotees. The more 'profane' models have been melted and converted into sacred utensils for the church service.

Very occasionally instead of an anatomical representation, we come across a silver tablet commemorating deliverance from illness. Here is a specimen inscribed in Latin:

P. Trapani cum suis / A. MDCCCLXXXVII / Ab Asiana Lue /
Incolumos (*Id-devot ta Maria*, 1888).

that is P. Trapani and his family spared from the Asiatic Disease of the year 1887.

(The Asiatic Disease was cholera of which Malta had seven outbreaks during the last century. The 1887 epidemic lasted three and a half months and had a mortality of over 50 per cent.)

Quite often the making of a vow was accompanied by the recitation of prayers and by touching the diseased part with some object associated with the healing saint. These actions include the smearing of the part, in the form of a cross, with oil obtained from the sanctuary lamp; touching the part with a sacred image or medal; sipping water in which rose-petals from the altar, dedicated to the saint or Virgin, had been immersed;

4: Cassar P-4, 5 (no date) 1964 EZ6 Malta EZ6

782 755 drinking from the spring of the grotto at Mellieha village where the Holy Virgin is venerated; or placing some earth on the sick person from the tomb of a hermit reputed to have died in odour of sanctity in Gozo (Vella Haber 1946, p. 16).

755 782 214 [204] Sometimes the donation of an 'ex-voto' was coupled with the publication, in a religious periodical, of the circumstances of the illness and its extraordinary cure. The following are typical case-histories, translated from Maltese, culled at random from such a periodical:

(i) Victoria Conti, who had been suffering from deafness in the right ear for four years, was told by two doctors that her condition was incurable. She prayed to the Holy Mary and as soon as she placed the oil from the sanctuary of Ta Pinu (Gharb, Gozo) on her ear she regained her hearing.

(ii) A woman fell from the balcony of her house and, as a result, had a series of convulsions, lost the faculty of speech, and became moribund. She remained in this precarious state for fifteen days when her parents promised the offer of a silver 'ex-voto' to the Holy Virgin if their daughter recovered. The following night the patient began to regain consciousness and to talk. She made steady progress and was well within a short time.

(iii) Joseph Spiteri, from Zabbar, had a mentally sick brother who, in a fit of frenzy, cut his throat. The doctor declared the case a hopeless one but, following a vow to the Mother of Christ, the patient began to improve until he recovered from his wound and from his mental illness within nine weeks.

(iv) Clo. Monsignier had measles and almost lost his eyesight as a complication. His mother vowed to the Virgin Mary that she would offer a silver 'ex-voto' in the shape of a pair of eyes if his sight was spared. Immediately this promise was made, the boy opened his eyes from which all the signs of disease had disappeared (*Id-devot ta Maria* 1894–9).

Other published accounts deal with cases of throat infections, puerperal sepsis, hyperpyrexia (up to 107° F), and trachoma. To appreciate the seriousness of these diseases up to thirty years ago, it must be remembered that the sulphonamide and the antibiotic eras had not yet dawned and that no effective therapy was yet available with the result that many patients with sepsis lost their lives and cases of trachoma ended in permanent blindness. Stories of accidents, such as falls from heights, scalding and involvement in vehicular traffic are also recorded. At times medical certificates over the signatures of prominent doctors were published as evidence of the gravity of the injury or illness sustained and of recovery therefrom (*Id-devot ta Maria*, 1887).

MEDICAL PAINTINGS

782 532 346 353 These are of various sizes ranging from 5 × 12 to 18 × 24 inches. They were much more numerous in the past than they are to-day. Church walls, which are now bare, were covered with these small canvases and wooden panels. A number of these 'ex-votos' vanished many years ago as in the case of the Sanctuary of the Immaculate Conception of Qala in Gozo (Vella Haber 1946, p. 13). In other churches these pictures still existed in great numbers up to about thirty years ago but have now dwindled considerably, instances being those of the Cave chapel of the Annunciation and St Leonard at Minsija (Birkirkara), the church of Tal Mirakli (Lija), and Tal Hlas (Qormi). One of the sanc-

4: Cassar P-4, 5 (no date) 1964 EZ6 Malta EZ6

tuaries that remains particularly rich in painted 'ex-votos' is the church in the Tal Herba district (Birkirkara) erected in 1640 and dedicated to the Birth of the Holy Virgin. These panels are hung up, one above the other, almost up to the ceiling so that the following description written almost one hundred years ago still applies with regard to this particular church: 'On the walls one sees a considerable number of small paintings representing the favours received through the intercession of the Holy Virgin by those devotees who had recourse to her in their calamities' (Ferres 1866, p. 322). As far as could be ascertained the latest painting in this church is dated 1944.

On the whole these pictures are the work of self-taught anonymous folk who never regarded themselves as artists but only as humble craftsmen. In fact their productions often ignore the rules of perspective while the colours and the shading are poor; but in viewing them one must take account of the fact that they were not intended to be decorative pieces. They were simply meant to be pictorial records of the occurrence of a medical emergency that was thought to be beyond human control and which ended happily in an extraordinary manner through a supernatural act. Indeed these pictures portray the moment in which the physician confesses that there is nothing that medical art and science can do to save the patient's life and the instant in which the Divine intervention occurs. Thus we behold the Holy Mary relieving a choking girl or rescuing a pedestrian from being crushed by the wheel of a carriage or see Our Lady stopping a run-away horse and saving its rider from harm (Plate 2, Fig. 2); or else softening the impact of the fall from a height of a stone-mason so that he reaches the ground uninjured; or sparing the life of a farmer from an enraged beast (Plate 2, Fig. 1). In this task of graphically reproducing an event, these paintings succeed very well.

OTHER VOTIVE OFFERINGS

Other things offered for medical reasons consist of: (i) Surgical and orthopaedic appliances such as crutches, plaster jackets, leather corsets, iron splints, metal sutures, etc. (ii) Foreign bodies removed from organs such as stones from the kidneys, needles from fingers, hair-clips from the throat, swallowed thimble, etc. (iii) Babies' dresses, some of them embroidered with gold thread, are a characteristic feature of the Mellieha sanctuary. This custom of offering the child's clothing as a token for recovery from illness prevailed also in connexion with the tomb of the Holy Hermit Kurraw at the Qala sanctuary in Gozo. The grateful mothers of sick children used to deposit the clothing of their offspring on the hermit's grave as a sign that the disease had been transferred from the children's bodies on to their clothing (Vella Haber 1946, p. 14). Babies' dresses are also offered in thanksgiving for an uneventful delivery and the birth of a normal infant. (iv) Wax tapers, decorated torches and bottles of olive oil for lighting the sanctuary lamp. (v) Sums of money. (vi) Jewellery is the most common 'ex-voto' to be seen to-day in Maltese churches. There are gold necklaces, finger-rings, brooches and other items of personal adornment. Apart from their intrinsic value, most of these gold ornaments represent the most prized possessions which the votary had to offer because they formed the most substantial part of a woman's dowry. To give an idea of the quantity of these valuable articles deposited in one single shrine during a month's time, here is a list, chosen at random from a religious periodical published in 1894: 'Sixteen gold rings, one pair of gold ear-rings with diamonds, two silver bracelets, a gold watch and a

1/A, 2/A [see plate II, facing p. 25.—Ed.]

4: Cassar P-4, 5 (no date) 1964 EZ6 Malta EZ6

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to the Director of the National Museum, Valletta, Captain C. Zammit, F.S.A., and to Mr Jos. Spiteri of the same department for their kindness in taking the photographs; to the Rev. Jos. Tanti and the Rev. Canon Jos. Zammit, administrators of Tal Mirakli Church and of Tal Hlas Church, respectively, for allowing me to publish pictures of 'ex-votos' preserved in their churches.

128
126

REFERENCES

Concilium 1935. *Concilium Regionale Melitense*. Malta.
FERRES, A. 1866. *Descrizione storica delle chiese di Malta e Gozo*. Malta.
Id-devot ta Maria 1887–99 (periodical) Malta. Dec. 1887, pp. 9–11; Sept. 1888, p. 147; Jan. 1890, p. 19; Feb. 1890, p. 35; May 1890, p. 85; Oct. 1890, p. 162; Jun. 1893, p. 99; Feb. 1894, p. 34; Mar. 1894, p. 49; Apr. 1894, p. 66; Feb. 1895, p. 34; Mar. 1896, p. 50; Oct. 1896, p. 163; Jul. 1899, p. 114.
KERR, A. 1893. The Assunta of Gozo. *The Month*, January.
PAVEY, A. E. 1951. *The Story of the Growth of Nursing*. London.
Santa Rita 1961. – *Santa Rita Perjodiku Agostinjan*, p. 192. Malta.
TANTI, REV. JOS. 1962. Personal communication.
VELLA HABER, K. 1946. *Ix-Santwarju Nazzjonali tal Qala*. Malta.
WILKINSON, (SIR) J. G. 1837. *The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, vol. III. London.
ZAMMIT, T. 1926. *Malta, the Islands and their History*. Malta.
ZAMMIT, T. 1935. *The Neolithic Hypogeum at Hal Saflieni*. Malta.
ZAMMIT, T. & SINGER, C. 1924. Neolithic Representations of the Human Form from the Islands of Malta and Gozo. J. R. ANTHROP. INST., 54, pp. 73–6.

113

CAPTIONS TO PLATES

1

PLATE I

Fig. 1. Silver votive offerings representing various parts of the body. The model between the trunk and the ear is a stylized form of the female breasts. (By courtesy of the Director of the National Museum, Valletta. Photograph by Jos. Spiteri.)

532
782

Fig. 2. This leg of baked clay is from the Roman ruins at Ras-ir-Raheb to the north west of Bahria, Malta. (By courtesy of the Director of the National Museum, Valletta. Photograph by Jos. Spiteri.)

Fig. 3. Bronze dies of liver and lower limb used by Maltese silver smiths for the manufacture of the silver 'ex-votos'. Scale in centimetres and inches. (By courtesy of the Director of the National Museum, Valletta. Photograph by Jos. Spiteri.)

PLATE II

Fig. 1. The picture tells the story so clearly that no inscription is attached to it. Note the Maltese type of windmill and the costumes of the peasants still in use during the last century. Tal Hlas Church, Qormi. (Photograph by Jos. Spiteri.)

532
782
789

Fig. 2. The landscape is not Maltese. Presumably this 'ex-voto' was offered by a foreigner or else the donor was a Maltese who met with a riding accident abroad. The letters V.F.G.A. stand for 'Votum Fecit Gratiam Accepit' (A vow was made and a favour received). Tal Mirakli Church, Lija, Malta. (Photograph by Captain C. Zammit, F.S.A.)

[402]
[291]

1 [plate I will be found facing p. 24; plate II faces p. 25. – Ed.]

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

liberation of the Maltese from the yoke of the Saracens by Count Roger of Normandy in the year 1090. 527 186 [175] [648]

A liberal programme is now annually arranged by the Committee embracing every kind of attraction at Notabile.

PILGRIMAGES TO MELLEHA (*) 778 788

On the last two Sundays of September, every year, the roads leading to Melleha are alive with merry parties, especially country people, on their way to that village, in order to visit the

---

(*) Melleha is a village some 10½ miles distant from Valletta, and about an hour's ride from St. Paul's Bay. It is renowned for the very old, perhaps the oldest, Sanctuary in the world, dedicated to the B. Virgin. This Sanctuary was founded by St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, while he was in Malta (58 A. D.) for the convenience of the faithful who lived in those neighbourhoods. Over the small alter is a picture of St. Mary, covering another old drawing of the same, executed by St. Luke. [361] [776] [532]

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

584 [301] her arrival, who presented her with a ring on which was engraved two hands united—the emblem of mutual faith—together with bracelets, necklaces, and a gold chain—she presenting him in return with a handkerchief trimmed with lace and bows of ribbon.

This ceremony is called *il chelma*, which means the engagement.

585 [292] [301] On the morning of the wedding day the most honoured personage among the husband's relations threw a fine white veil over the bride's head—who wore a brocade or velvet dress, in which the other relations made certain rents for the purpose of affixing small golden shells.

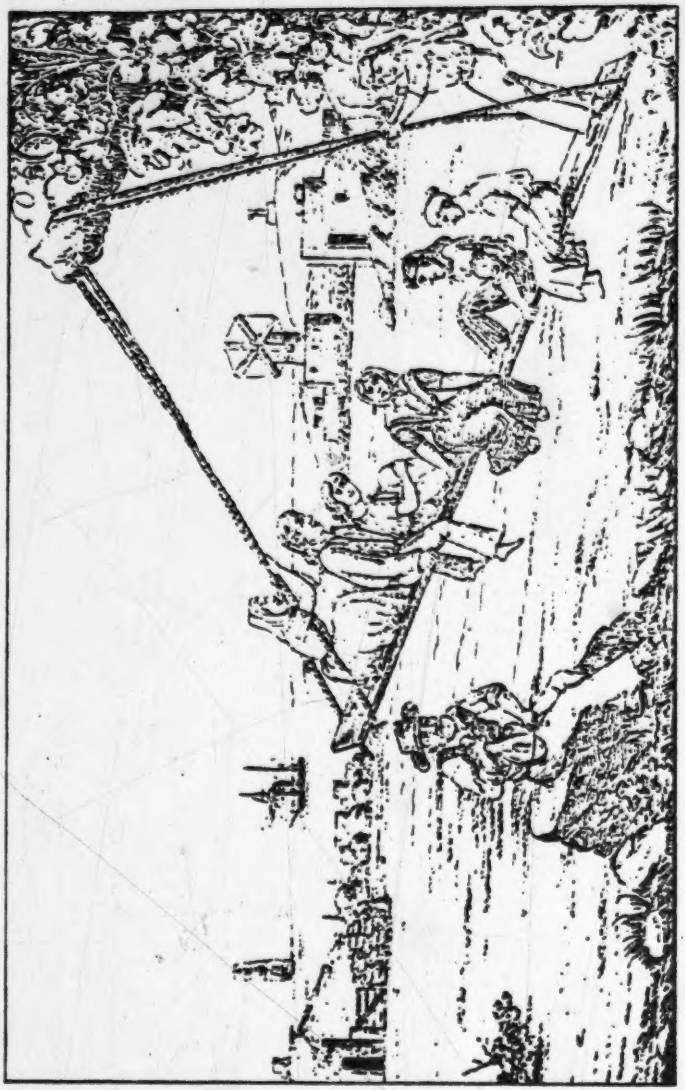
[533] The bridal procession then proceeded to the Church for the ceremony, attended by musicians playing on different instruments, and singers who sang stanzas in praise of the young couple. These musicians were preceded by three men, the first bearing on his head a basin of white earth on which was placed a big cake with two figures representing the bridegroom and the bride—the man who carried this basin wore also a scarf with a round cake hanging from it. The second carried a basket filled with sugar plums and candied nuts, which one of the relations distributed among such acquaintances he happened to meet. In the middle of the basket was a handkerchief folded in the form of a pyramid and ornamented with the images of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the Infant Jesus. The third man was constantly employed in burning perfumes. The bride and bridegroom followed, walking under a canopy of crimson velvet carried by four of the principal persons who attended the wedding. The rest of the relations and invited friends, called the *Haddara*, closed the procession.

[431] [532]

[202] The arrival of the bridal procession at the church was announced by the ringing of bells. The officiating

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

532 ●
796
291



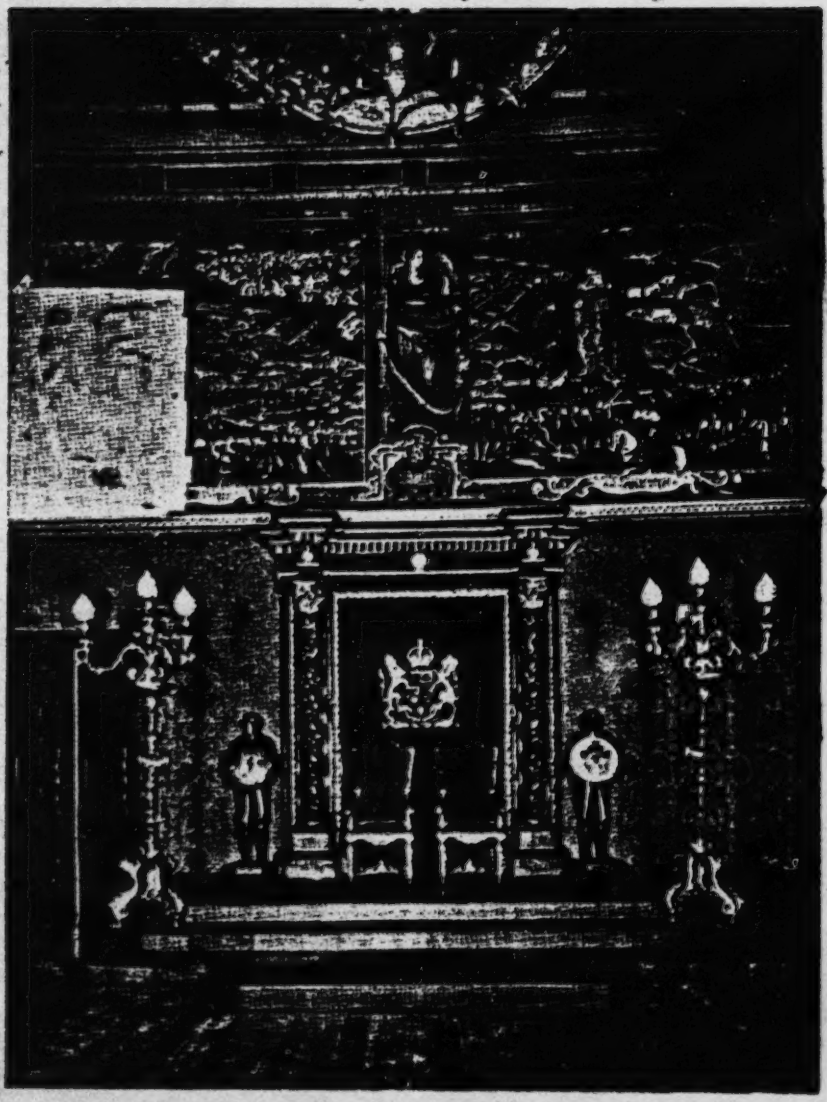
PEASANTS CELEBRATING "LAPSI"—FESTA OF THE ASCENSION
(From an old Maltese print)

[facing P. 128]

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

[Frontispiece, facing Title Page]

344
352
● 532
353



THE PALACE, VALETTA: THRONE IN HALL OF S. MICHAEL AND S. GEORGE

Above, portions of the frescoes depicting the Great Siege. The patch over the fresco to the left of the throne covers temporarily the portion of it damaged by bombing.

Fr.

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

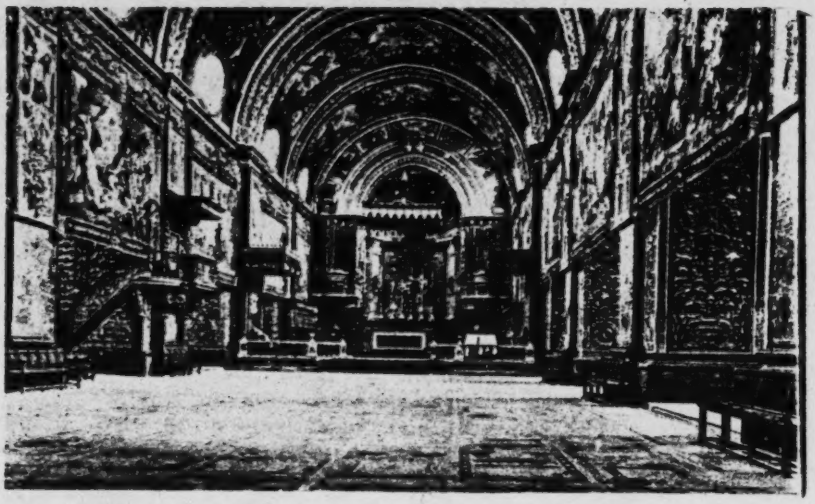
rocky surfaces of the island, the tram-lines of neolithic man; and he will notice, if he is observant, that the dimensions of the flat two-wheeled carts which, with their gaily caparisoned little ponies or donkeys, are the traditional vehicle of the Maltese countryman of to-day correspond almost exactly with those of the carts of his neolithic predecessor, as deduced from the width of these ancient tracks. If he is interested in strange animals that still survive but must be a living link with hoary antiquity, he can study on the picturesque, uninhabited islet of Filfla, now used only as a target for gun practice, a remarkable lizard of the darkest green spotted with red (*Lacerta muralis* var. *filfolensis*), which occurs nowhere else in the world but on this tiny and diminishing spit of rock.

The dominant architectural notes of the Maltese Islands are megalithic and Baroque, and the gamut thus established can scarcely be called a narrow one. So far as works of art are concerned, the Museum in Valetta, housed before World War II in the Auberge d'Italie and since 1958 in that of Provence, contains a scientifically arranged exhibition of Stone Age culture unrivalled in any other country. This collection, whose most bizarre items are the astonishing fat female deities characteristic of Maltese neolithic sculpture, was organized in chronological sequence by the Museum's late learned Director, Sir Themistocles Zammit, who made a second international reputation in the field of Maltese archæology and excavation after having made an earlier one in medical research in connexion with undulant, or Malta, fever.

But the visitor is not obliged to study the activities of these remote peoples solely in museums. If he wishes to see how the distant forbears of the present population cultivated their land he has only to watch the Maltese farmer of to-day ploughing his field; if he is a student of cultural survivals he will note the eye of Osiris still painted on the bows of Malta's sturdy little schooners and characteristic "Gozo boats." If

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

342
352
353



NAVE OF S. JOHN'S, VALETTA, WITH ITS TAPESTRIES DISPLAYED
[See pp. 177-180.]

BEHEADING OF S. JOHN THE BAPTIST, BY CARAVAGGIO, IN THE ORATORY OF S. JOHN'S, VALETTA
[See pp. 242-243.]

•532

[facing P. 129]

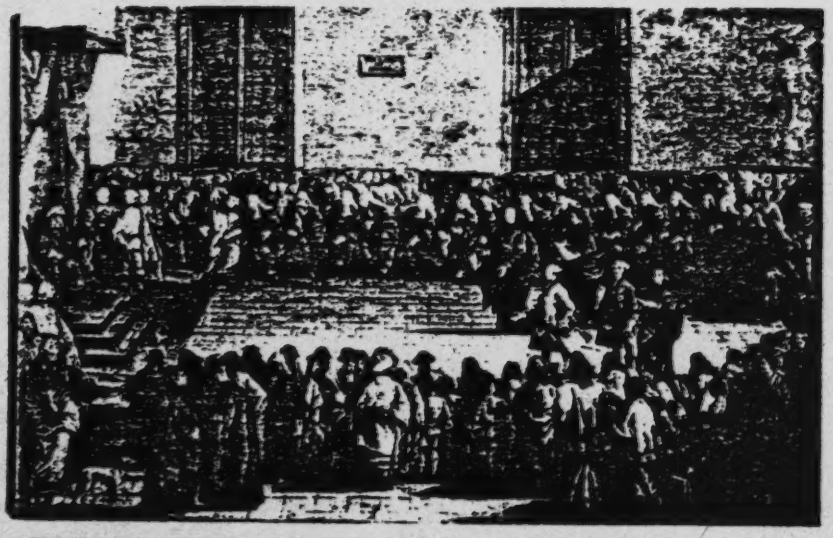
9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

344
●532
353

THE PALACE, VALETTA: A CORNER OF THE TAPESTRY CHAMBER (FORMERLY THE COUNCIL CHAMBER)

[See pp. 182 and 184–186.]

532



DEPUTATION OF THE PATRICIATE OF UDINE ARGUING BEFORE G.M. PINTO AND HIS CHAPTER-GENERAL IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER OF THE PALACE, VALETTA

By Giambattista Tiepolo.

[See pp. 181–182.]

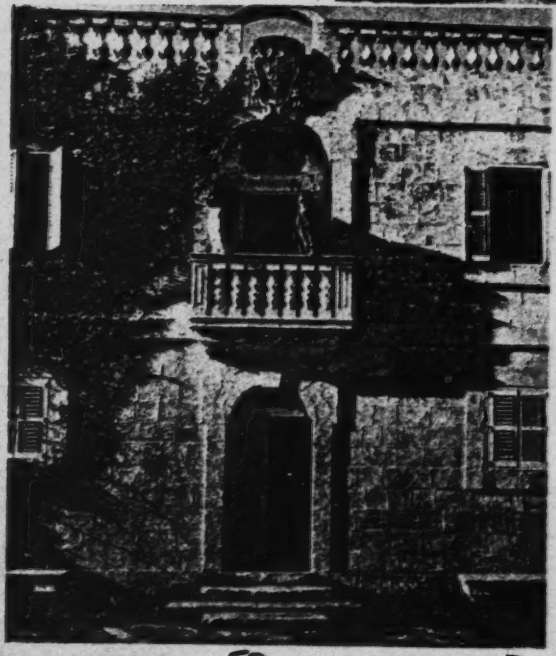
[facing P. 144]

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

•532

CARDINAL FREDERICK, LANDGRAVE OF HESSE, GENERAL OF THE GALLEYS
In the Palace, Valetta. Dated 1644.
[See p. 183.]

344
341



ENTRANCE TO THE INQUISITOR'S SUMMER PALACE
[See pp. 100–101.]

[facing P. 145]
[pp. 145-160 not processed]

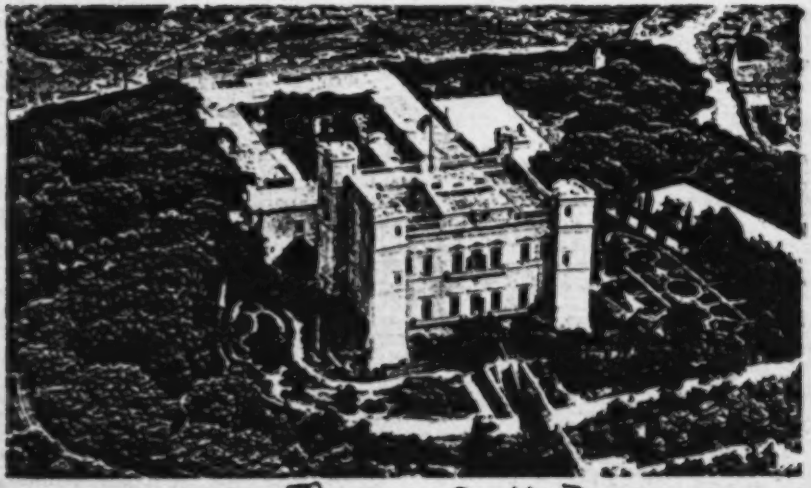
9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

●532
793

BUST OF G.M. CARDINAL DE VERDALLE
[See p. 190.]

VERDALA CASTLE
[See pp. 187-191.]

344
341



[facing P. 160]

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

341
251

OPENING ONE OF THE GRANARIES, FLORIANA
[See p. 217.]

SOUL IN PURGATORY
[See p. 205.]

IN A MALTESE GARDEN
[See p. 104.]

●532

[facing p. 193]
[pp. 193-196 not processed]

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

is no sacrifice they will not gladly make for the greater dignity and beauty of their churches. Take, for example, the case of Mġarr—one of the smallest and poorest of the parishes of Malta and the one most cherished by that great seaman and lover of Malta, the late Admiral Sir W. W. Fisher. Here between the two wars the inhabitants, nearly all hard-working peasants, under the enthusiastic leadership of their parish priest, Father (later Monsignor) Edgar Salomone, built a great new church by their own efforts, bringing their weekly contributions to the building fund in eggs and fowls and vegetables and whatever else they produce.

At street corners statues of saints, sometimes also of souls enveloped in a purgatorial blaze, afford them ever-present reminders, encouraging or minatory as the case may be, of the next world; in this one they love the great ecclesiastical ceremonies, particularly the processions which are one of the features of Maltese life. These assume on Good Friday something of the character of a Passion Play, with members of lay confraternities staggering along Merchants' Street in Valetta beneath the weight of life-size groups of the Passion carved with gruesome realism. I have also seen these processions in Palermo, where I have been shocked at the flippancy and irreverence not so much of the onlookers as of the actual participants. The Maltese play their parts in these functions with profound and solemn devoutness. Indeed, some of them may be bearing their burden, whatever it is, in fulfilment of a self-imposed penance, concealing their features behind a hood with eye-holes that covers the head.

But on the annual *festa*, the local saint's day, of their village they give themselves up wholeheartedly to rejoicings, which are definitely on the noisy side. For they are punctuated by the explosions of crackers, maroons and every procurable form of noise-producing apparatus, and they are illuminated by ingenious, locally made fireworks. On these days the casals are a brave sight as they fly from the top of every house of any importance the flag of

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

668 of July 1955, to avoid unemployment, the representatives of the Maltese people, in Parliament assembled, declare themselves absolved from their pacts and obligations towards the British Government, and from those so far assumed towards the Allies of that Government—this position to obtain for so long as the British Government fails to guarantee that the number of persons employed by the said Government in Malta shall not decrease before there is "alternative employment" for those discharged.

On this inauspicious note ended the year 1957 despite the patient efforts of the Government in London and of Sir Robert Laycock and his advisers in Malta to bring the protracted and often vexatious negotiations to a happy issue. The latter's task thereafter was made no easier by a Circular issued in February 1958 to Heads of Departments and all other Malta Government employees forbidding them on pain of disciplinary action "to make any verbal or personal contacts on any official matter with any member of the other side of the Diarchy" without the personal permission of the Minister concerned. In April these words were extended to cover "any official matter *or otherwise*." Thereby was created the anomalous situation that the islands' officials subordinate to the Mintoff Administration had to boycott those of the Maltese Imperial Government not only officially but socially, even to the extent of declining the Governor's invitations to dinner. Be it added that the embargo was far from being universally observed, while Ministers continued to seek direct personal contacts with the Imperial side of the Diarchy whenever it suited them to do so.

3

643 In 1608 one of the greatest and most innovating painters of the Seicento, that Michaelangelo Amerighi who was better known from his birthplace as Caravaggio, spent some months of his short and disordered life in Malta, employed

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

by the splendid, vigorous and art-loving Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt. Notwithstanding the Grand Master's generous protection the 38-year-old artist soon made Malta too hot to hold him. He was put in prison, escaped and died in Italy within a year or so. But in the meantime Malta and the world had become the richer by two pictures which he painted for S. John's Conventual Church in Valetta, the great Beheading of S. John the Baptist and the smaller S. Jerome. In 1956 these pictures, which had never before left the walls for which they were painted except to be put in a place of safety during the Second World War, were sent to Italy in a British man-of-war for restoration and for display at the Exhibition of seventeenth-century art held in Rome during the winter of 1956–57. Of this Exhibition, indeed, the larger picture provided the central attraction.

At the close of the Exhibition the pictures were brought back to Malta, again in one of Her Majesty's ships, but to the general astonishment were forcibly impounded on arrival by the Maltese Government on Mr Mintoff's orders without previous notice and conveyed to the Museum despite vigorous protests from the ecclesiastical authorities. The Mintoff Government had clashed with the Church on other matters but there had been no inkling that its unpredictable leader had ever contemplated the transfer of these pictures to civil custody or the use of unilateral high-handed action to bring it about.

The state of tension with the Church created by this and other subjects of disagreement persisted for another year, that is to say until April 1958, by which time Mr Mintoff, now ready to break with the British Government, decided to clear the decks by making his peace with the Archbishop. As abruptly as he had seized the Caravaggios did he return them to S. John's, at the oddly chosen time of 1 A.M. on Sunday, the 20th April. On the following day statements were issued from the Archbishop's Palace and the Prime Minister's office declaring that good relations between the Government and the Church had been restored.